

OUT OF TIME

Issue No. 15

Out of Control--Lesbian Committee to Support Women Political Prisoners

September 1992

CALENDAR

Sept. 16 - Oct. 17: **ART IN CHAINS.** Art of Leonard Peltier and more Native American artists. Grand opening is Oct. 7. Mission Cultural Center, 2868 Mission St., San Francisco.

Sept. 19: **BENEFIT** for Norma Jean Croy and the International Tribunal. Women's Bldg, 3543 18th St., San Francisco; Sat. at 7:00 PM.

Oct. 2-4: **INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL** of Indigenous Peoples and Oppressed Nations in U.S.A., Mission High School, 3750 18th St., San Francisco. Fri. Oct. 2 at 7 PM; Sat. & Sun. Oct. 3, 4 from 9 AM to 10 PM.

Oct. 4: **ANNUAL CHASKY** of Auto-descubrimiento, a Procession from Dolores Park to La Raza Park; Sun. from 1 PM to 6 PM.

Oct. 9: **BENEFIT DINNER** for Leonard Peltier, Women's Bldg., 7 PM.

Oct. 11, Sun: **SUNRISE CEREMONY**, Dolores Park, San Francisco, at sunrise.

Oct. 11: **DEMONSTRATION, RALLY, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**, Aquatic Park, foot of Van Ness Ave., San Francisco, 11 AM

Oct. 12, Mon.-**PRESS CONFERENCE** to announce results of Tribunal, and future celebrations of Indigenous Peoples throughout the

GET YOUR FUCKING HANDS OFF ME -- WOMEN AT LEX FIGHT BACK

August 12-14, the first sustained act of resistance by women prisoners in the u.s. federal prison system in 20 years took place.

On Wednesday night, August 12, there was an argument between two prisoners in the central yard area ("Central Park") at about 8:30. It was over quickly, and everyone began walking away, towards the housing units, because we have to be inside by 9:00. A lieutenant came running to see what had happened, pulling on his black leather gloves. He yelled, "Hey, you! Stop!" When no one stopped, he grabbed the first Black woman he saw, lifted her in the air and body-slammed her to the ground. Other women yelled at him that she wasn't even involved in the argument, but he kept on attacking her, putting his knee in the back of her neck and smashing her face to the pavement. He pulled her hands behind her back, cuffed her, dragged her to her feet, and another guard took her to the lieutenant's office.

This was witnessed by about 100 women. They were all very upset by it, and they gathered to talk to the Captain. At 9:00, all but about 15 women returned to their housing units, after being assured that the beaten woman would be released back into general population, and that a thorough investigation would be undertaken.

But on Thursday morning, it turned out that the woman had not been released, and that some of the women who had witnessed the incident had been put in the hole ("segregation"), as well. And despite the promise of an investigation, by 3:00 PM the prisoners were told that the investigation was completed, and no further statements would be taken.

This was not the first instance of physical brutality at Lexington, nor, certainly, of racism. The male guards have been putting their hands on us more and more, both in frequent pat searches, and whenever they want us to move, or to stop, or whatever. This particular lieutenant had threatened several women with brutality. The normally high level of racism had also recently heightened, following the L.A. verdict and the uprisings there. Several Black women who had complained of prejudice had been put in the hole for "inciting to riot."

But this time, it all struck a nerve. On Thursday, word traveled: don't go in at 4:00 PM (the major daily "standing count" throughout the Bureau of Prisons). Stay out in Central Park and demand that the women be released from the hole, and the lieutenant suspended.

At 3:50 PM, when the hourly "movement" began, the scene in Central Park was tense and exciting. Usually, it's rush hour -- 1900 women in the largest women's prison in the world, rushing

to the units to try to get a few things done before the 4:00 count. On this Thursday, instead, it was like gridlock: everyone moved slowly, if at all, waiting to see what would happen.

At 4:00 PM, an announcement ordered us all to go inside for count. Many did, but 90 of us stayed out, and moved into the center of the Park. We sang Bob Marley's "Stand Up For Your Rights," and chanted "Stop the police brutality," "We want justice," "Let them out of seg," and "Figueroa (the lieutenant) must go." Ringed by guards, including a S.O.R.T. (SWAT) team in full regalia, we demanded to speak to the Captain. While we demonstrated, we heard shouts of support from the windows of the housing units, and at least two "all available officers" codes to different units, meaning that the women who had returned to the units for count were doing some kind of support actions, too.

We had to shout the Captain down, when he finally came to talk to us, because he was telling too many lies. Finally he said that the lieutenant would be back at work on Monday, and we all knew there was no point in any further discussion. We were hand-cuffed and escorted to seg, with most of us being taken to the old high security unit, which has been out of use almost entirely since the BOP was forced to close it in 1988. Seven women to a cell, no blankets, no water -- it was payback time.

The next day, 12 of us were taken out and chained up on a bus to Marianna, Florida. As each of us was taken out the prison, the whole place was locked down. But it was midday, so there were over 100 women in Central Park on their lunch breaks. As each of us was escorted through the Park, we were cheered -- loudly, enthusiastically, joyfully -- by everyone there.

I've since learned that while we were in transit to Marianna, a smaller group of women repeated the action in Central Park at 4:00 on Friday. There were also quite a few small fires set in various housing units during the night. And a number of women were shipped to Pleasanton after we 12 were shipped to Marianna.

WHAT IT FELT LIKE

For a few bright moments, we felt free. As we were moved into Central Park. Defying the daily, grinding regulations and control of prison life, we were liberated from the fear that holds prisoners in check. We had the power of justice on our side, and in our eyes as we looked at one another.

The most common thing you hear people say at Lexington is "If men prisoners were here, (in a co-ed prison), the police wouldn't get away with this. Women don't stick together, so the prison can put anything they want on us."

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Norma Croy Denied

Diana Samuelson, Norma's attorney, submitted over 175 letters from supporters, including several job offers and places of residence in the Bay Area, to the parole board on her behalf on July 16.

Tragically, the Board paid little, if any, attention to them. From the beginning of the hearing, it was clear that the three-member panel had already decided to deny Norma parole for another two years. The Board refused to consider evidence of Norma's innocence which had been presented at her brother's 1990 re-trial. It ignored Judge Stern's statement, and the declaration of the jury foreman, that had Norma been tried again with her brother, she would also have been acquitted of the charges. In short, it was an outrageous abuse of power.

WRITE LETTERS

Norma's attorneys intend to file an administrative appeal of that decision, and invite her supporters to write directly to the Board of Prison Terms at 545 Downtown Plaza, Suite 200, Sacramento, CA 95814, to express feelings about their decision.

Dhoruba -- UPDATE

August 17th, Manhattan Supreme Court Judge, McQuillan, decided not to rule in Dhoruba Bin Wahad's favor despite voluminous legal evidence submitted by Mr. Bin Wahad and his attorneys verifying illegal government and prosecutorial misconduct.

It is expected that once the new judge is appointed, the Manhattan D.A.'s office will make a formal application to re-imprison Dhoruba pending outcome of evidentiary hearings which would be the first public legal forum to address the role that cointelpro played in criminalizing political dissent and targeting Black activists.

Mumia -- UPDATE

September 14th there will be a meeting before Judge Casey in Pennsylvania regarding Mumia Abu-Jamal's (political prisoner and MOVE supporter on death row) case. It is hoped by all that this meeting will not be to inform his counsel that he is to be the first to be executed in many years in Pennsylvania. Stay in touch. We may need to act quickly.

LEX UPRISING *cont'd from pg 1*

But we proved that that's not true. The racism and brutality that do down every day just didn't go down on this day. We'd had enough, and we trusted and respected ourselves enough to stand up together. The demonstration was international, inspired mainly by Jamaican, Haitian, and African-American women. It was joined by Latina women and some white women as well. It was clear, for once, that if the police could continue to attack Black women (for example, the hole holds more Black women than any other nationality), then no one would be safe.

Anger is a constant reality in prison, and the entire prison system is designed to ensure that that anger is turned inwards, to destroy one's own self-respect and humanity, instead of being

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Amnesty Intl. Recognizes Puerto Rican Prisoners

from El Bientevao Libre.

The Board of Directors of the U.S. Chapter of Amnesty International recently passed 2 resolutions focusing on Puerto Rico at its annual general meeting. The first called for the U.S. chapter to take "whatever action necessary to seek to ensure that the International Secretariat undertake a comprehensive study of, and issue a country report on, the human rights situation in Puerto Rico."

The second resolution addressed the issue of the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners and also called for a comprehensive study and special report on "the human rights situation surrounding the detention, treatment and incarceration of alleged Puerto Rican political prisoners wherever they are located."

The resolutions, both of which passed by a majority, were drafted by Francis Boyle, a renowned attorney and expert in international law, and member of AIUSA Board, and were presented by Board member, Veronica de Negri. Ms. de Negri is a former Chilean political prisoner who survived two years of imprisonment and torture, only to lose her son to death by burning at the hands of the Chilean police.

ACT-UP CHAIN HONORED BY PRU

ACT-UP-CHAIN was honored by the Prisoners Rights Union at their annual dinner on July 16, 1992. The PRU is a 20 year old organization of ex-prisoners and their families, attorneys, and other professionals and citizens concerned with prison issues. They promote legislation favorable to prisoners and their families, and print "The California Prisoner" newspaper.

ACT-UP CHAIN received the highest honors of the evening for their outstanding and creative work to improve living conditions and medical treatment for prisoners with AIDS, to oppose the isolation of these prisoners from general population and regular prison programs, and to keep this issue in the public eye.

Rita Silk-Nauni Is Out!

Rita Silk-Nauni was released from prison last year under the court order that she leave the state of Oklahoma and not return. Her people have not heard from her since she was released. We wish her a good life, wherever she is.

Alan Berkman Out

Alan is happy to be out. He wants it said that part of him stays inside, and that he's committed to getting freedom for all. Alan says he feels good but still has residual health problems for which he is doing homeopathy and other alternative care. He did "get down" at the party they had for him in N.Y. where he is restricted from travel.



turned outwards towards the system and the oppressors. It took courage to resist all that, in the context of the total control, abuse and disrespect of women that constitutes women's prison. We had to trust each other, that we would not be standing alone. As we looked around at one another, we knew that our demonstration was a victory, no matter what punishment might follow. A small flame of power, sisterhood and dignity had been rekindled.

Laura Whitehorn, Anti-imperialist political prisoner, MarianAL.